829 considered the initiator of all action. Frequently there are complaints of high taxes, criticisms of certain policies, and dissatisfaction with certain officials, but the authority of a government to undertake any course it chooses would never be challenged. There does not exist any concept of a limit to obedience or to the powers of government.

7. Social Control

626 621 The mechanisms of social control within an Okinawan village are not easily observed or studied since they are so rarely overt. One is impressed from the outset by the homogeneous character of the community, a natural outcome of the common experience and cultural heritage which all the members have shared. The average villager has had a limited range of contacts during the course of his or her lifetime, imposed to no small degree by the all-consuming demands of subsistence agriculture. Minorities within [183] the community rarely exist, and where they do, they are not recognized as such, for this homegeneity, in addition to being an actuality, is insisted upon as a cultural ideal. Consequently great stress is placed on presenting a united front to the outside. Within the community aggressive behavior is not tolerated and so great is the fear of rift through discord that few official acts are initiated without first securing informal concordance; consequently, formal political meetings are most often marked by unanimity and agreement. In enlisting the support of the villagers for a given project or proposed line of action leaders most frequently appeal to group solidarity, stressing the values of cooperation.

As is so often found in small communities where all the members have a face-to-face relationship, the chief mechanisms of social sanction are ridicule, censure, and the threat of ostracism. The small size and homogeneous nature of the Okinawan village limits the individual's behavior to a rather narrow and inflexible standard. The individual, however, must consider his actions not only in terms of the reactions of others to him [672] but also in terms of the consequences for his family. Under the old king- [178] dom the family was legally responsible for the actions of its members, and at the present time an individual is officially registered as a member of a certain family and is always thought of by the villagers in association 626 with that family. One's mistakes as well as one's achievements reflect upon 621 the other members of the family and are shared by them. This emphasis on 181 family and community over the individual serves markedly to curb individualism and to further the homogeneity of the society. Conformity and honoring one's obligations are the major cultural values. The surrogate for this strong cultural deemphasis of the individual is provided by a close ego identity with the family and community and by the security which they offer in return. The severest sanction which can be applied is expulsion of the individual from his group.

8. Local Autonomy

642 621 On a small island with a highly centralized government there is little room for local autonomy. Most action is initiated in the higher echelons of government and is unquestioningly obeyed at the lower levels. There

to the modern 'son'), was the land-holding unit. The administration of the majiri supervised the distribution of land to the villages or mura (political unit equivalent to present-day 'ku') where it was divided among the various families. The amount of land allocated to a given family was dependent on its size, age and sex of members, and social position; consequently the houses of the nuru priestess and local officials received a proportionately larger allotment than the houses of ordinary farmers. The distribution of arable land under this system at the end of the nineteenth century was as follows: 67.1% farmers, 13% local lords, 8.3% nuru priestesses and local officials, 10.9% newly-cleared land.[1] The farmers worked the lands of all groups. 175 423 [632]

The origin of this communal land allotment system ('jiwari seidō') lies deep in Okinawa's past far beyond the beginning of its recorded history. Redistributions were made periodically to compensate for changes in household size and fertility of holdings. These reallotments occurred at from four to thirty year intervals at the option of the local (majiri) administration, with the average being about every tenth year. Certain lands were excluded from redistribution, particularly the lands of the local lords. Usually the lands of the so-called yādui settlements made up of the younger sons of gentry families were also excluded. Newly-cleared land was placed in a special category in order to encourage land development; ordinarily it was treated as the private property of the family that cleared it and was not subject to reallotment. Despite these exceptions nearly 75% of the arable land was subject to periodic redistribution.

Under this system the tax-bearing unit was the majiri, not the family. Each majiri was headed by a jiturei, an appointed official from Shuri, who functioned as an administrator, judge, and policeman; he was held responsible for the tax payment of his district and was subject to recall and punishment in the event of default. The state took no action against the family or household which failed to pay its tax; such matters were left to the jiturei and his assistants, who were free to deprive the offending family of all its lands if they saw fit. When a house defaulted, its lineage was held accountable and forced to make up the deficit; if the lineage was unable to meet its obligations, the entire village (mura) had to assume the responsibility. A marked feature of the old village was a number of granaries set aside for the community's annual tax levy. 175 423 651 632 [672] [613] [621]

Land valuations were permanently fixed in 1610 when the daimyo of Satsuma had the region surveyed to determine the amount of tribute which could be extracted. There was no reassessment until after the annexation, although the overall tax levy was raised in 1635 and again in 1722. Only arable land was subject to taxation; no taxes were levied against house lots which were privately owned, nor against the forest and grass lands which were communal property. The tax levy for each majiri was based on the estimated productivity of its land at the time of the survey; it was a fixed tax and was never altered. It had been set so that in theory 40% of the yearly crop went to the government and 60% was to be retained by the 175 423 651

[1] Higa, 1950, p. 64.